

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7791

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL MILAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 8351

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: SOPN, PFOR, IT, XG

SUBJECT: TV MONTECARLO AND ITALIAN PROGRAMS

REF: ROME 8296

1. EMBASSY HAS BEEN CONTACTED BY OSCAR MAESTRO, CHIEF OF INFLUENTIAL SPE AND OPUS ADVERTISING FIRMS, WHO SAID THEY CAME AT SUGGESTION OF JERRY MODESTI, US CORRESPONDENT FOR CONSERVATIVE NEWSPAPERS OF MONTI CHAIN. THEY SAID THEY ARE WORKING WITH INDRO MONTANELLI, PRESTIGIOUS DIRECTOR OF DAILY IL GIORNALE, WHOSE POLITICAL LINE IS FORMLY ANTI-COMMUNIST. MONTANELLI (AND OFTEN SEVERAL OF HIS TOP STAFF) ARE NOW APPEARING DAILY HALF-HOUR ON NEWSCASTS OF TV MONTECARLO, ON TIME PURCHASED BY IL GIORNALE, IN ITALIAN-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS DIRECTED AT ITALY. THESE PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN UNDER FIRE BY COMMUNIST PRESS IN ITALY FOR THEIR OPEN STYLE AND CANDID REMARKS. TECHNICALLY, PROGRAM WILL DONE, AND SIGNAL REACHES MOST IMPORTANT POPULATION CENTERS IN ITALY, ESPECIALLY IN NORTH.

2. NOW GIORNALE HAS REPORTEDLY PURCHASED AN ADDITIONAL HALD HOUR, FOR LATER EACH EVENING -- ABOUT 10:30, FOLLOWING FILM. THEY CLEARLY INTEND TO USE THIS PROGRAM FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES, DURING THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. MAESTRO CAME TO US TO REQUEST ANY APPROPRIATE MATERIALS OR SUGGESTIONS.

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3. OUR REACTION TO PROPOSITION HAS BEEN THAT MISSION WILL BE GLAD TO PROVIDE USIS FILMS (THOSE ON BICENTENNIAL/FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY THEMES MIGHT BE OF SPECIAL INTEREST) FOR PLACEMENT IN APPROPRIATE, NON-CONTROVERSIAL CONTEXT, BUT THAT THE INITIATIVE AND FLAVOR OF THE PROGRAMMING SHOULD CLEARLY BE ITALIAN: ANYTHING THAT COULD BE ATTACKED AS U.S. ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE ITALIAN VOTES VIA FOREIGN TELEVISION WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE FOR ALL CONCERNED. MAESTRO SAID HE WOULD ARRANGE ANOTHER VISIT TO EMBASSY NEXT WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, BY HIS OPUS VICE PRESIDENT (A SIG. HERTEL) WITH TWO PERSONS REPRESENTING TV MONTECARLO (A MME. COVINY AND A M. ANTOINE). THEY WEILL WANT TO VIEW WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER. BEFORE THEN, WE WILL CONSULT WITH MONTANELLI TO DETERMINE MORE PRECISELY WHAT THE GROUP HAS IN MIND AND WHETHER THEY CAN BE RELIED UPON TO EXERCISE PRUDENCE. IN ANY CASE, WE INTEND TO CONTINUE TO EMPHASIZE THE POINT THAT USG MATERIALS CANNOT APPEAR IN ANY CONTEXT THAT WOULD RISK CONTROVERSY DURING NEXT MONTH OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING HERE.

4. REGARDING PROGRAM MATERIALS, IN ADDITION TO NORMAL EXPOSITORY FILMSON US HISTORY, ETC., GROUP APPARENTLY WILL WANT TO USE FOOTAGE ON BERLIN WALL, PRAGUE '68, AND SIMILAR REMINDERS OF COMMUNIST OPPRESSION IN EAST EUROPE. OTHER IDEAS DISCUSSED: INTERVIEWS WITH SUCH FIGURES AS SOLZHENITSYN (ROME 8269), AND WITH WEST EUROPEAN LEADERS WHO POINT TO THE POTENTIAL EFFECT ON ITALY'S RELATIONS WITH EEC AND NATO PARTNERS OF COMING ELECTORAL CHOICES. THEY WILL NO DOUBT FOCUS UPON THE POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ITALY'S POST-WAR GOVERNMENTS DOMINATED BY DC, EVEN THOUGH PARTY CURRENTLY UNDER CRITICISM. DISCUSSIONS OF SUCH CONCEPTS AS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION VERSUS THE REGIMENTED SOCIETY ARE BEING CONSIDERED.

5. MISSION WILL APPRECIATE RECEIVING PERTINENT COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS FROM DEPARTMENT/USIA OR PARIS BY COB MAY 25.VOLPE

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